

Minutes of the meeting held in Bern on Monday November 24, 2014

Swiss Commission for Astronomy (SCFA)

1) Call to Order

The chair, G. Meylan, calls the meeting to order at 02:00 pm.

Attendance at the meeting:

Present: W. Benz (UniBE), P. Jetzer (UniZH), L. Mayer replacing G. Lake (UniZH), G. Meynet (UniGE), G. Meylan (EPFL, chair), D. Pfenniger (UniGE), A. Refregier (ETHZ), M. Steinacher (guest from SERI), F.-K. Thielemann (UniBas), and S. Udry (UniGE).

Excused: A. Jäggi (UniBE), G. Lake (UniZH), T. Schildknecht (UniBE), and W. Schmutz (PMOD/WRC).

G. Lake (UniZH), unable to attend this meeting, has asked L. Mayer (UniZH) to replace him during this meeting. T. Schildknecht (UniBE) has sent to the chair information about Items 2 and 3 below, while W. Schmutz (PMOD/WRC) has sent information about Item 3 only.

2) Screening of the candidates in Switzerland for IAU membership

The SCFA has received 8 nominations, with CV from Antonio Cava (UniGE), Hakim Atek (EPFL), Marina Battaglia (FHNW), Maurizio Falanga (ISSI), Lucia Kleint (FHNW), Danuta Paraficz (EPFL), Kevin Schawinski (ETHZ), and Veerle Sterken (ISSI).

After a brief discussion of each nomination, in agreement with the SCFA IAU membership rules available on the web page of the SCFA (https://documents.epfl.ch/groups/l/la/lastro-unit/www/WebsiteFiles/SCFA/rules_IAU_web.pdf), the Commission accepts all nominations, except the one from V. Sterken, who has obtained his PhD thesis only two years ago, instead of the “at least 3 years” mentioned in the above rules. Since this is the most recent PhD thesis of the 8 nominations, this candidate should resubmit CV and application in three years, before the IAU GA of 2018.

3) Election of the next SCFA chair

The SCFA has received two nominations: Marcella Carollo (ETHZ) and Stéphane Udry (UniGE). Both candidates have sent a brief statement about their actions if they were elected as chair, statements sent to the members of the SCFA ahead of this meeting. The chair asks S. Udry to leave the room.

A discussion follows during which the various qualities of each of the two candidates are mentioned. It is reminded that the balance between geographical location, scientific fields, and institution should also be considered. It is also called to mind that next year, the next scientific delegate for Switzerland to the ESO Council will be Willy Benz (UniBE) and that the delegate to the ESO STC will still be Michael Meyer (ETHZ).

The conclusion of the debate is that we should vote by hand. Taking into account the 2 votes expressed via email, the final results are: 3 votes in favor of M. Carollo and 7 votes in favor of S. Udry. Consequently, S. Udry will be the next chair of the SCFA, from Jan. 1, 2015 on.

4) Revision of the SCFA rules

The current rules are available on the webpage of the SCFA (<http://lastro.epfl.ch/page-21774-en.html>). A draft of the new rules, as proposed by ScNat, has been sent to the chair of the SCFA by Ch. Preiswerk (ScNat) and forwarded to all SCFA members by the chair. Noting that all the idiosyncrasies of the SCFA rules are present in this new draft, the SCFA concludes that D. Pfenniger, the ScNat MAP delegate to the SCFA, in collaboration with the SCFA chair, will finalize the draft in one of the Swiss national languages. The final draft will be sent to Ch. Preiswerk for approval and translation.

5) Review of the status of the Roadmap update printing process

Willy Benz, chair of the update writing committee, has sent the current draft of the update to all SCFA members. There is a brief discussion about figures, in order to suppress useless duplications (two pictures of Paranal), avoid historical pictures (one picture of the Jungfrau-joch), and add missing pictures (Alma and E-ELT). The work done by the professional editor is close to completion and the printing process will start before the end of 2014.

6) ScNat factsheets on large astronomical infrastructure

As already eluded to during the last SCFA meeting, Friedel Thielemann emphasizes the need for writing a few factsheets related to astronomy in order to make them available to the grand public, in printed and electronic forms. Facilities such as VLT, VLTI, ALMA, E-ELT, GAIA, CHEOPS, and EUCLID should be described in the form of three separate groups: ESO, ESA, and “other facilities”. An editorial board is created with F. Thielemann as chair, and with M. Meyer (ETHZ, tbc), G. Meylan (EPFL), G. Meynet (UniGE), and A. Refregier (ETHZ).

7) The meeting is adjourned at 03:45 pm